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AUTHOR Achilles, C. M.; DuVall, L.
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ABSTRACT

The administrator preparation reform issue is affected by a split in loyalties between the "professional" model and the liberal arts model. Whereas recent calls for reform follow the professional model, most professors of educational administration, who must implement the reforms, are products of the liberal arts tradition. This paper reviews literature and research in educational administrator preparation, particular attention to research criticisms, professor complacency, and cooperation between researchers in the field. Several criticisms of dissertation research are offered, and steps are suggested to avoid or remedy the problems. In addition, an introduction to practicum design is presented which considers the context, develops a concept of the ideal, analyzes and compares the present state to the ideal, notes the discrepancy, and searches for the problem at the heart of the discrepancy. Appended are definitions of the three categories of problems and two diagrams of purpose-practice relationships in educational administration research. (21 references) (SI)

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WHERE ARE THE MODELS AND PARADIGMS?

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C. M. Achilles, Professor
Educational Administration
School of Education
U. of N. Carolina, Greensboro
Greensboro, NC 27412-5001
919/887-3015

L. DuVall, Director
National Ed.D. Program
Nova University
3301 College Avenue
Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314
315/475-7366

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"WHERE ARE THE MODELS AND PARADIGMS?"*

CONTEXT, ISSUES, AND FRAMEWORKS

Introduction

Among recent calls for administrator preparation reform is that preparation of "Leaders for America's Schools" should follow the "professional model" and avoid slavish adherence to the liberal arts model. Unfortunately, it is more easily said than done. Most professors of education administration--those who must implement this recommendation--are products of the liberal arts tradition which they are now asked to eschew. Change research and theory note that change is difficult: people tend to do as they have done, and as they have been taught. John Dewey (1938, p. 138) said it succinctly:

> The way in which the problem is conceived decides what specific suggestions are entertained and which are dismissed; what data are selected and which rejected; it is the criterion for relevance and irrelevancy of hypotheses and conceptual structures.

As a starting point, the authors accept the premise of preparation of education leaders within a professional-school model. On the surface, it makes sense, is logical and offers one hope for improving education administration preparation programs. Having accepted this premise, the authors then address some thorny problems of research in preparation programs. Traditionally, the doctoral culminating experience has been independent research, typically the

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*C. M. Achilles, Educational Administration, School of Education, UNCG, Greensboro, NC 27412-5001. Portions of this material were included in the Southern Regional Consortium of Colleges of Education (SRCCE) Proposal for a Federal R&D Center for Educational Leadership, 1988. Achilles prepared this material for SRCCE's unsuccessful proposal. Other brief portions have appeared in diverse places, but not as a coherent (?) entity.

L. DuVall, Director, National Program for Education Leaders, Nova University, 3301 College Avenue, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33314. DuVall was formerly the Director of the Center for Educational Policy and Management (CEPM), University of Oregon. The CEPM was formerly a federal R&D Center.

"dissertation." Doing research involving people is complex and particularly so, when attempting to be scientific--randomization, treatment and control groups, designs powerful enough to allow confident statements about cause, effect and generalizations, etc. It is difficult to set up strong experimental research to explore topics of importance in education and in education administration.

In the past, education administration (EA) professors, often as part of field service--or with Bureaus of Field Studies or School Study Councils--engaged advanced students in school studies or comprehensive school district surveys. Although these studies did emphasize administration and practice, they often became stagnant in a "formula" approach--so much so that some seemed to be "cut-and-paste" productions. These studies lacked "scientific" rigor and were often seen as "Mickey Mouse" by graduate students, some EA professors and most liberal arts faculty. Predictably there was pressure for change; the new-found "Theory Movement" helped bury the school survey. Behavioral sciences and research courses filled time slots vacated by field studies and surveys. This also influenced methodology courses and doctoral research.

As a workable substitute, research tended toward theory building, testing behavioral science theories in education, etc. Now embedded within reform calls is a call for "research on practice." What models are available to guide the research? Does this mean a return to the comprehensive survey? Not so. Perhaps the states of the art in education administration and in research have advanced so that "Thesis-Antithesis-Synthesis" can provide important insights. We have new tools and concepts since the last visit to this persistent idea.

A Brief Problem-Solving Effort

Griffiths (1983) noted that a major study of EA professors in 1973 found a

perplexing complacency and a poor intellectual climate in EA departments in the face of many problems of preparation programs (p. 20). This complacency still exists (McCarthy, et al., 1988) and compared to 1973 the field today seems (1) even less able to respond to the need for change and (2) determined to continue to rely on the past as a basis for the future.

Research in EA has seldom received rave reviews either from educators or from scholars in other fields. Erickson (1979) spoke to the "State of the Art"" of research in EA and found the cup less than full--even less than half full. Work was disjointed, amorphous and poorly focused (pp. 9-10).

> My task is to assess the "start of the art" in a research domain labeled "educational administration." But the phrase "educational administration" does not accurately indicate what area of inquiry I should assess. I have never encountered a satisfying discussion of the parameters of that field. In practical terms, the field consists of whatever scholars associated with university programs in "educational administration" consider relevant. It is, to say the least, amorphous.
>
> . . .Charters speaks, not of work precise, reproducible, and theoretically sound, but of "acres of disjointed, theoretically barren, non-cumulative, and downright shoddy studies that . . .[weave] no strands or themes." He laments "endless, witless administrations of the LBDQ, OCDQ, POS, ABC, and XYZ scales to haphazard collections of teachers and administrators." Analyzing student dissertations in departments of educational administration, Haller ends up not a great deal more ecstatic. McNamara demonstrates that many articles in Educational Administration Quarterly are distinguished by naive use of statistics. (pp. 9-10)

In reviewing research on education administration from 1967-1980, Bridges (1982) noted that "the more things change, the more they remain the same (p. 24). Bridges' review notes over-used areas of research and identifies gaps in the research base, such as the impact of the superintendent as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), study of private school chiefs (see also Chubb & Moe, 1987; and Coleman & Hoffer, 1987) and the need for clarity and diversity in study of impacts or school outcomes. Bridges (1982) and others (e.g., Haller,

1979; Haller & Knapp, 1985; Haller, 1989, Knapp, 1982) have decried weak research designs, simplistic analyses and use of dubious questionnaires in research in this field. Other criticisms include: no programmatic research thrust, ad hoc efforts rather than building a knowleldge base, and research of little practical utility. Bridges advocates integrative reviews and meta-analytic approaches to organizing EA's research base. "If individual researchers are not using their own research as vehicles for building a knowledge base about school administrators, reviewers must assume the responsibility for integrating knowledge from a set of disparate studies" (p. 25).

Some have criticized education administration research for inattention to the field and to the administration of schools. Practitioners believe that preparation programs have lost touch with the requirements of administering schools (Pitner, 1982 and 1988; Lucas, et al., 1988; Thomson, 1989; Guthrie & Clifford, 1989). Communication between researchers and the field has suffered. To alleviate this problem, personnel in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) might coordinate research with problems of the field through responsible involvement of practitioners and the use of multi-disciplinary teams to (1) refine problems of practice into research agendas, (2) help define rigorous methodology and design, (3) assist in analysis, (4) provide ideas about how research results relate to specific disciplines and other fields, (5) identify effective development steps and dissemination strategies for research results, and (6) assist with evaluation of new processes and programs.

Changes in research and in preparation programs will require an important cooperative role between/among various "actors" in the web of education. The study of problems of practice should ehlp refine preparation programs. Some

excellent schools show that there can be school excellence. These schools should be studied to determine how administrators implement school improvement ideas. This argues for understadning how change occurs and becomes part of the school community, and for attention in preparation programs to change and communication processes and skills.

Griffiths (1988) recalled that in their 1973 study, Campbell and Newell expressed concern over the dismal quantity and quality of research in EA and that this condition has not appreciably improved (p. 21). Haller (1979) noted that doctoral students relied heavily on questionnaires. Haller's study found that fully 80% of doctoral studies were done with questionnaires; 53% used self-constructed instruments and 27% used published questionnaires. Boyan (1981) and others noted that most (80%) research in EA was conducted by graduate students. Few EA professors actually do research, but many supervise research. Since this bleak scenario does not seem ready to change, some extended effort is needed to improve research in education administration, and to strengthen processes for future research. Indeed, no single model needs to be touted as the one best model at this time.

Some Complaints About Traditional Dissertation Study

"I did a good study, but it sits on a shelf gathering dust" is not an uncommon comment about dissertation research. There are several reasons for this, but one clearly is that the research is designed and conducted by a researcher in the absence of clear definition of a problem related to practice, and so when it's done it has little or no utility to the practicing administrator or to improving the practice of education. The justification of such a dissertation certainly can be found in the second element in Figure 1, the development of knowledge or transfer of research skills to the student.

Ranges of Dissertation or Culminating Experience Types

Basic Purposes for Ed Research	1 Theory and Theory Building	2 Theory, but Practical Application	3 Study of Practice, but related to Theory	4 Model Analysis and/or Building	5 Study of Practice & change in Practice	6 Evaluation Research	7 Study of Practice (describe and interpret)
Knowledge building							
Knowledge (Skill) Transfer (Students do research)							
Decision oriented							
Improvement of practice							
Etc.							

Figure 1. Ranges of Dissertation Types and Purposes of Education Research

But unless the research is valuable to practicing administrators the single justification of getting a student through a doctoral program is usually not sufficient to keep the study from a dusty, cobwebby fate. Such studies very seldom influence the operation of schools, serve to advance theory, build on a developing knowledge base or begin the foundations of a new knowledge base. If we were to accept the criterion that research in our graduate programs should have the potential for impacting and improving the practice of administration, the traditional dissertation would generally fall short. (The sheer volume of research in education administration compared to the miniscule improvement in practice is one generalization that seems obvious.)

A Synthesis of Problems/Issues/Suggestions or Solutions

Problems and criticisms of research cited previously (plus some concerns with preparation programs enumerated in such places as NCEEA and NPB) suggest that steps to improve research and to improve preparation programs may be fruitfully linked. As the focus of research shifts to problems built upon (generated from) practice, the problem-finding/problem-solving emphasis can be incorporated into preparation programs as an important core of inquiry linking Higher Education and The Field. Professors and students can work cooperatively to analyze problems (or exemplary practices) of practice which they have "discovered" (i.e., in Getzels', 1979, mode of The Discovered Problem. See Appendix A). Next, they can retreat to the shady Groves (graves?) of Academe to reflect, design studies and plan their methodologies. Through careful attention to sharing of problems and ideas, researchers can link new studies to the growing knowledge base which will reflect how what administrators do may influence the outcomes of education, such as pupil learning (e.g., see Hawley, 1983). Although there are plenty of problems to go around--and numerous

exemplary practices to be studied--a synthesis of problems of, and research upon practice will help build EA's data base. Some repository, such as the Silver Center for Reflective Principals, for both problems and possible solutions will help organize the data base.

A related preparation-program issue, not carefully addressed in this paper, is the need for current faculty to improve their research skills. An inescapable conclusion of Boyan's (1981) finding that 80 percent of research in EA was conducted by graduate students, of Haller's (1979) findings that 80% of doctoral studies were based on questionnaires, and the McCarthy, et al. (1988) finding on EA professorial research, is that many more professors direct doctoral research than conduct their own research agendas. This condition removes professors even further from the field of practice, in this case, from even the practice of what they often profess--research and inquiry. Table 1 provides a summary of some of the criticisms/concerns about research in EA, and offers some steps to help remedy the concerns. Research on practice, employing some new models and paradigms that have the potential to offer EA both a knowledge base and a method of inquiry--two requirements of a discipline--is one way to coordinate steps to improve education.

Some Options

There are many and diverse approaches to the independent research which is usually considered the terminating event in a rigorous preparation program. Figure 1 provides one way to think about ranges of dissertation types and purposes of education research. While the four basic purposes for education research, as listed in Figure 1, are probably all appropriate for culminating research activity for practicing administrators, research which is decision oriented or which aims at the improvement of practice may be more the domain of

TABLE 1

Criticisms and Concerns about Research in Education Administration and Suggested Steps to Avoid or Remedy Them

Criticisms/Concerns about Research in Ed. Admin.	Steps to Avoid or Remedy Criticisms
Research has little practical utility; Inattention to problems of schools; Practitioners don't use research results (such as they are).	"Problems of Practice" focus; Use of results by preparation programs; Practitioner involvement; Conferences; Improved R&D training.
Poor research designs, over-use of questionnaires, lack of Research & Development (R&D) focus.	Experienced Principal Investigators (PIs) could provide seminars on varied research methods; More full-time "apprenticeships."
Poor research skills; Few professors actually do research.	Training; Skilled PIs; Use student/faculty teams to conduct studies.
Research is ad hoc with little attention to integration of results into theory or into a model to advance later research ; Poor concepts of research on administration (vs. on administrators, etc).	Design (a priori) studies amenable to comparisons and meta-analytic approaches; Research emphases developed in accord with organizing frameworks, e.g., "Leadership Contexts/Education Outcomes," or ideas expressed by Haller and Knapp (1985).
The systematic data base for education administration is not substantial (N.B., Bok, 1987).	Organizing framework; Coordinated efforts; "Leadership Contexts/Education Outcomes" focus. Professors should read Handbook (Boyan, 1988) and add to the database with series of studies.
Research lacks vision and neglects impending problems and concerns. Good ideas and substantial research are not the norm.	Focus on gender, demographics, and new or future emphases; Think tank and practitioner involvement to find problems (Problems of practice).
Preparation programs are not adequate: poor models, criteria, standards, content, etc. Little research emphasis in preparation programs.	Research focus on preparation programs, including models – model building, pilot-test and analysis of models, research of results.
Insularity. Inattention to advances in other fields; inattention to findings in other education administration studies.	Think tank; involve representatives of other disciplines. Professors should read in the research journals! (McCarthy, et al., 1988, esp. pp. 66-67)

practitioners while research aimed at knowledge building, theory testing or theory building may be more the domain of future researchers and professors, than vice versa. In like token, among the seven options of ranges of culminating experience types listed in Figure 1 (p. 6), probably the first two (theory and theory building, and theory with practical application) may be more the domain of the researcher and future professor and the last five (which are more practice oriented than the first two) may be more the domain of the future practitioner than vice versa. Development of this classification in no way suggests that there will not be overlap, or that people should be restricted to one type of research or another, or that there may not be other purposes for research or ranges of dissertation types. The classification is to expand the way that people think about the culminating research activity of preparation programs. Appendix B includes other attempts to show in diagram form differences in "dissertation types." Each figure in Appendix B offers a variation on the theme presented in Figure 1, suggesting that the types of inquiry move within a Practice ⟵ Theory field, usually being neither pure theory nor purely a description of practice.

THE PRACTICUM DESIGN

Introduction

The practicum design fits well with two current ideas: (1) research on problems of practice (to improve practice) and (2) the concept that a leader should have "vision," articulate it, and do something to achieve that vision. The practicum design follows Getzels' (1979) idea of a "discovered" problem vs. the reactionary mode of the "presented problem." In the practicum design, the researcher considers the context, develops a concept of the ideal (a better state, vision, or goal); analyzes and compares the present state (actual) to

the ideal; notes the discrepancy and searches for the problem at the heart of the discrepancy. After problem finding and problem refining, the researcher reviews prior research, literature, theory, and the best of practice to identify possible/probable solutions. After consultation and careful context analysis, the researcher chooses a solution to remediate the problem, refines and implements the chosen solution, studies the processes and outcomes, writes up the entire effort and, if appropriate, disseminates the results. There are certain guidelines. The proactive problem-solving effort must be within the researcher's sphere of influence, and the researcher must (1) actively do the implementation, (2) employ appropriate methodology, and (3) report results following approved research-reporting procedures.

The "Practicum Design" fits well within columns 3-7 of the ranges of possible research or culminating experience types shown in Figure 1 (p. 6); it fulfills the four basic purposes of educational research shown there. Most importantly, it focuses the research activity on problems and improvement of education practice under the control of the researcher.

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1. PRESENTED PROBLEM SITUATIONS. The problem is given to the problem-solver. It probably has a known formulation, known method of solution, and known answer. The problem is proposed by someone else and given to the problem solver (This is the situation most prevalent in schools. Think of all of your classes and subjects. Given that the side of a square is four feet, what is the area?)

2. DISCOVERED PROBLEM SITUATIONS. The problem exists, but is formulated by the problem solver, not by someone else. It may not have a known formulation, known method of solution or a known solution. Why do children, at about grade 3 or 4, begin to seem to dislike school when almost all children are initially eager to attend school? Is this an American education phenomenon, or does it exist in other cultures?

3. CREATED PROBLEM SITUATIONS. No problem is evident until someone creates or invents it. An artist creates a painting: A poet expresses beauty through an ode. An advertising artist may be given a problem--design an illustration for an advertisement. A fine artist starts with a blank canvas and proceeds to create a problem which the same artist then moves to solve. (Getzels, 1979: 11).

Figure A: Three Categories of Problems (Excerpted from Getzels, 1979, p. 11) to Show One Key Difference in Problem Solving (Presented Problem) vs. Problem-Finding (Discovered and Created Problem Situations).

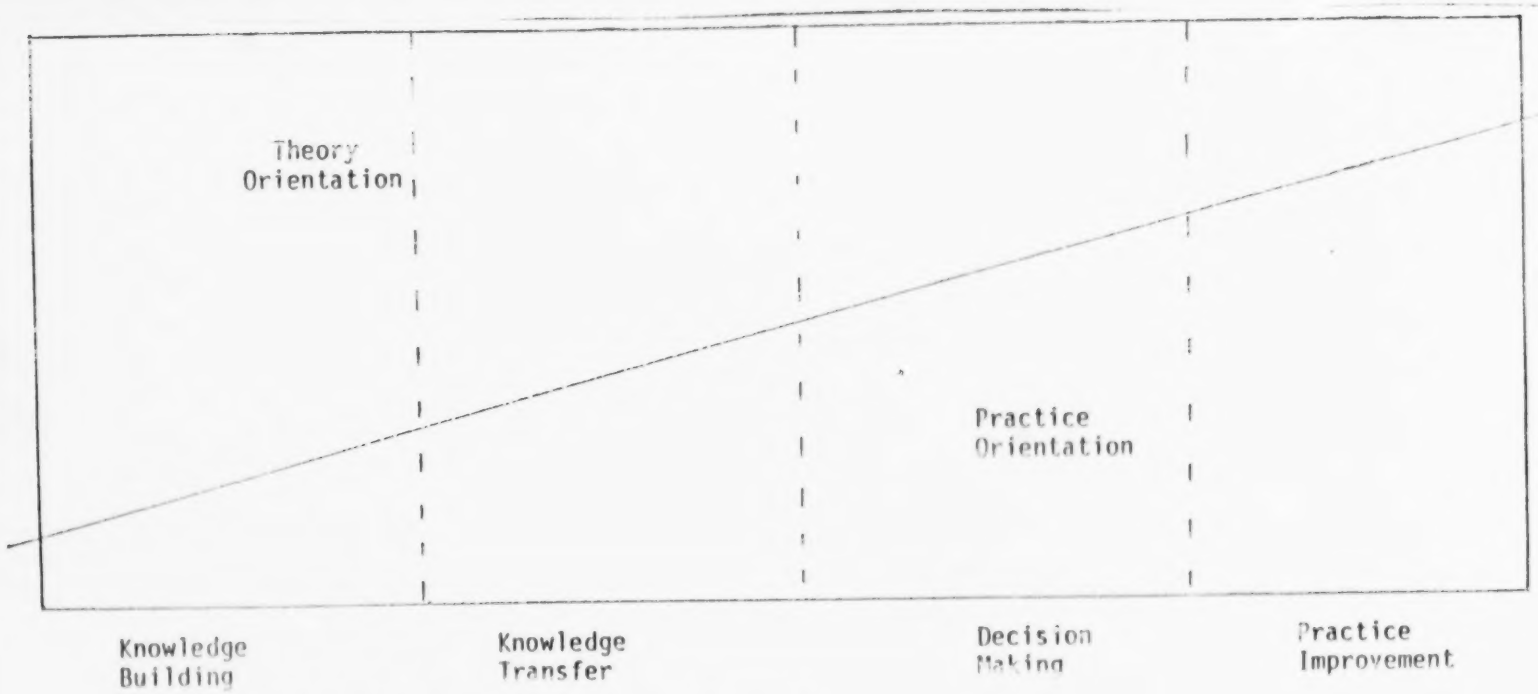

Figure B-1. Basic Purposes of Ed. Ad. Research

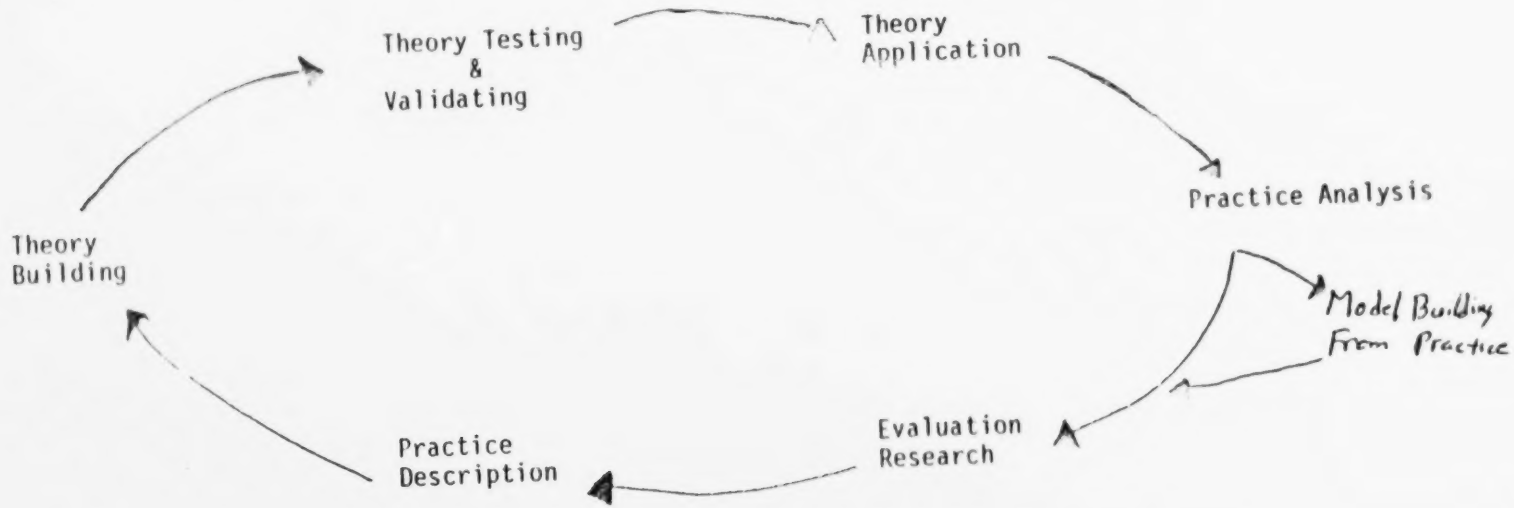

Figure B-2. Relationships of Typologies of Ed. Ad. Research